

THE BENEVOLENT SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY
ILLUSTRATED;

IN A

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S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. THOMAS SNELL,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

SECOND CHURCH

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ACTS, xxvi. 29.

And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.



HE Conversion and Apostleship of *Paul*, have been justly considered as furnishing no small evidence, in support of the truth, and divinity, of the Christian Religion. This remarkable man, first known by the name of *Saul*, was highly distinguished for his abilities, learning, and eloquence. Trained up a Pharisee, and holding the first rank among that numerous and popular Jewish sect, he was placed under the best advantages to propagate his own religious system, and to crush every other. His life corresponded with his doctrine, in the eyes of the strictest of the sect; and he was zealous of the traditions of his fathers, above most of his years and standing.

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He was a decided and inveterate enemy to the religion of Jesus Christ. When the blood of Stephen, the first christian martyr, was shed, he stood by, consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. His whole soul was bent in cutting off from the earth all who payed homage to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, without distinction of age or sex. He searched for them in every house, in which they were to be found, and committed them to prison; and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them. "Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

Nothing was farther from the thoughts or desire of Saul, than the event which took place, when he drew near Damascus. Suddenly, at midday, there shone round about him a light from heaven, eclipsing the brightness of the sun. Our bloody persecutor, with those who journeyed with him, fell to the earth. To him was addressed a voice, in the Hebrew tongue, "*Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?*" The appearance, and the voice, filled his soul with awe and amazement; and, convinced that what he saw and heard were immediate communications from above, he exclaimed—"Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "*I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest,*" in my disciples—you cannot prevail against me—you are wounding and destroying yourself! "And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me

me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do: For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things, which thou hast seen; and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." When Saul rose from the earth, his eyes were so affected by the glory of that light, which had shined around him, as to be unable to distinguish objects; and he was led by those who were with him, and conducted into Damascus. How different was this entrance, from that which he had designed! But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways. This bloody persecutor "obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them, who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." To return,

After Saul had continued three days without sight, and without eating and drinking, a certain disciple, at Damascus, whose name was Ananias, came to him, by divine command, and laid his hands upon him, that his blindness might be removed, and that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost. The scales immediately fell from his eyes, he received baptism, and preached the faith which once he destroyed. He labored more abundantly than all the other Apostles,

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to propagate the gospel ; and was the most successful instrument, in this work, that was ever raised up, in any age or country. In advancing the Redeemer's kingdom, he labored from youth to old age ; and to this cause he was willing to sacrifice worldly gains and honors, and even life itself.

After Paul had spent many years in preaching a crucified Saviour, and in gathering churches among the Gentiles, to whom he was particularly sent, the Jews laid violent hands upon him, in their temple, and would have put him to death, without the formalities of a trial, had not the Roman officer, who commanded the castle in Jerusalem, rescued him from their outrageous malice. To the same man he was afterwards indebted for the preservation of his life, when more than forty of the Jews had bound themselves under a curse, saying, That they would neither eat nor drink, till they had embued their hands in his blood.

The Apostle first made his defence before the people at large, as he stood on the stairs which led up to the castle. He next pleaded his cause before the Sanhedrim ; and afterwards before Felix, the Roman Governor, and Festus, who succeeded him. After a hearing before these several tribunals, he appealed to Cesar. While he was kept in confinement, till an opportunity could be found of sending him to Rome, Agrippa, a professed Jew, and king under the Roman emperor, came to Cesarea, in company with Bernice, his sister, to congratulate Festus on his accession to the government of Judea. Festus acquainted Agrippa with the case of Paul, whereupon the king desired

fired to hear him in person. On the following day, "When Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth." This illustrious prisoner entered into a detail of his former life, and his conversion to Christianity. He made an appeal, in the close, to Moses and the Prophets, in support of the divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth, as the promised Messiah. In this place Festus interrupted him, crying out, with a loud voice—"Paul! thou art beside thyself! Much learning doth make thee mad!" The Apostle replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be Christian." These words of the king furnished an opportunity to the Apostle to express himself as in the text—*I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*

The spirit, which breathes in this declaration, bears no resemblance to the heated zeal of a blind zealot. Nor does it carry any appearance of likeness to the conduct of those designing religious partisans, who provoke opposition, that they may avail themselves of their sufferings, to draw the pity, and the prejudices,
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of the unthinking multitude over to their side. The abilities, the knowledge, the experience, and much more the conduct, of Paul, forbid such an imputation. Where, among all the public trials of the celebrated sages of pagan antiquity, do we find such wisdom, such integrity, such fortitude, and such dignified meekness, as in the behaviour of this christian hero; whether he was defending himself before an incensed rabble, or before governors and kings? The first bias given to his mind, in his juvenile years, was wholly on the side of his accusers; and his worldly interest and reputation forbad his espousing the doctrine of the cross. Nothing, but the irresistible force of truth, could have influenced him to embrace the cause of the despised Galilean; to make such wise, vigorous, and persevering efforts, for its advancement; and to resign up, for its sake, every thing that was dear to him as a man. He was every way qualified to be an able and impartial witness of the truth of the gospel. There is no way in which his testimony can be impaired; as the enlightened and the candid must acknowledge. He must have been influenced by the best motives, when he expressed his earnest desire and prayer, that all who were assembled to hear his defence, might embrace that religion, for which he was called to suffer. Under his unjust and cruel treatment, he did not discover a spirit of revenge; but his whole conduct breathed good will to the crowd, which curiosity, or malevolence, had drawn together. He wished them all to become real Christians; because he knew that, in that way alone, they would escape future misery, and inherit everlasting happiness.

happiness. He did not derive his present feelings from the lessons taught him by Gamaliel, nor from the pompous rites, which once flattered his pharisaical pride ; but from the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is also to be remarked, that he expressly excepted *his bonds*, when he uttered the desires of his heart for the conversion of his hearers. He had no wish, however cruelly they had treated him, that they might be loaded with his chains ; but that they might share with him the blessings, which Christianity offers, without being subjected to his sufferings.

From the passage of scripture we have been considering, in its connection, we learn the true spirit of the primitive Ministers and Christians.—It was their hearts' desire and prayer to God, that their fellow men might be saved. The Apostle Paul manifested this spirit, ever after he became a disciple of Jesus Christ. With what tenderness, and warmth of affection, doth he speak of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, in their hardened and blinded state. He declares, that he had "great heaviness, and continual sorrow in his heart," on account of their rejection of gospel grace.* To promote the salvation of sinners, of whatever nation, he, and the other Apostles, were willing to travel round the world, and expose themselves to hardships, and perils, of every kind. To men, whose minds embraced such objects, and whose hearts were warmed with such affections, prisons were turned into houses of praise.

All true Christians "have been made to drink into one spirit : " And however various their gifts, employ-

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* Romans ix.

ments, or degrees of sanctification may be, they agree in resembling the benevolence of their common Lord and Master. How much the everlasting welfare of mankind lay on his heart, is witnessed by his incarnation, his obedience, his agony, and his death. He wept over impenitent Jerusalem, "Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hidden from thine eyes."* He prayed for his murderers, as he was expiring on the cross—"Father, forgive them! for they know not what they do." He was delivered for the offences of sinners, and was raised again for their justification.

To enter more particularly into the nature of that benevolence, which the gospel dictates and inspires, we may observe,

First, That every real Christian loves his neighbor as himself. Not confined within those selfish and contracted feelings, which constitute the essence of depravity, his heart is enlarged, by that generous affection, which makes the happiness of others his own. It must, indeed, follow, from the limited nature of man, that the happiness of each individual is, under Providence, intrusted to himself, in a different sense, from the happiness of his neighbor; but this does not militate against the duty of viewing the welfare of the latter in the same light with his own. The portion of intelligent existence, which any one possesses, does not derive its primary worth from its being *his*, but from the relation it bears to the Infinite Mind, and to the whole intelligent creation. The character

* Luke, xix. 42.

character of God, the capacity of the rational nature for happiness, and its relation to the Creator and his offspring, are the foundation on which the divine law is built. That temper of heart, which corresponds with our relation to God, and to our fellow creatures, is called *love*; and is the sum of all that the supreme Lawgiver requireth of us. The mediatorial interposition, which provides a relief for the guilty, is not designed to change the nature of moral government, nor to conduct men to happiness, who, through life, remain strangers to holy love. This affection only, will unite creatures to God, and to each other; and can form a moral fitness for the joys of paradise.

Under the influence of divine love, every true Christian feels interested in the everlasting welfare of his fellow creatures. He considers, that they have souls of the same worth as his own, that they are as capable of enjoying happiness as himself, and that the future endless punishment, which is threatened, must be as dreadful and intolerable to them, as it would be to him. Hence, he is led to pray, and to make exertions, for them; that they may be delivered from the bondage and guilt of sin, and be made holy and happy. The followers of Christ remember the wormwood and the gall, which attended their former state of alienation from God. Full well they know, that peace cannot dwell in the breast of that man, whose heart is at variance with his God, with the felicity and glory of his kingdom, and with the dictates of the monitor, implanted within him. They will, therefore, earnestly desire, that sinners may be converted

converted from the error of their way, and may be saved from eternal death. They will not be overcome of the evil, which they may receive from the hands of wicked and unreasonable men; but will rise above it, and strive to overcome it with good. Christ declares, in his sermon on the mount, "If ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" We are strangers to christian love, if we cannot pray for our enemies; and that God would have mercy on them, who have no compassion for their own souls. The spirit of benevolence increases in believers, as they advance in sanctification, and brightens the light which the world receives from their example.

Those, who wish well to mankind, cannot consent to the final excision of the impenitent, in the future state, on any other ground, aside from their personal desert, than the necessity of their punishment to promote the wise and holy designs of the government of Jehovah. The torments of hell, considered in this light, will not give pain to the inhabitants of heaven; in whom the weakness of flesh and blood will be done away, and selfish interests will wholly cease. But, while the followers of Christ can look on sinners as prisoners of hope, they must warmly desire, that they might unite with them, in travelling the road to the New Jerusalem; and that they might join together, in praising God, and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Secondly, The regard, which true Christians have for the honor of Jesus Christ, impels them to desire the salvation of sinners.

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The sufferings of Christ, and the ingathering of sinners of the human race into his kingdom, are events, which are connected with each other, in the revealed will of God ; and the last is considered as the fruit of the former. *Isaiah*, liii. 10, 11 : " Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief : When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities." That such fruit should follow the atonement made by the Son of God, is promised in the covenant of redemption. To this the Redeemer refers in *John* vi. 37th, 38th, and 39th verses : " All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

It is evident, from the foregoing, and parallel places, that the design of Christ's coming into the world cannot be accomplished, without rescuing some of our apostate race from the dominion and guilt of sin, and bestowing upon them eternal life. The universal misery of mankind would defeat one important end of the atonement. Were none of Adam's posterity delivered from the curse of the law, and brought unto glory, the promise made to him by the
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Father would fail, and the divine character would suffer.

All, who have at heart the honor of Christ, must, with the Apostle in the text, ardently desire, that sinners may submit to his sceptre, and know by experience the riches of his grace. Friendship to a person prompts us to wish him success, and that his worth might be publicly acknowledged. If we be friends to Christ, we shall pray that he, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, may receive devout and thankful homage from mankind, and that they may join in the song of the redeemed, "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

In addition to the foregoing motives, which influence the desires of christian benevolence, may be added,

Thirdly, That the glory of God is displayed in the salvation of sinners.

In the work of redemption, the attributes of the triune God are most clearly manifested to the minds of intelligent creatures. Ephes. iii. 10: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." In redeeming and saving sinners, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each hath his distinct office. The moral perfections of the Deity shine with the brightest lustre in the atonement, and in its application. Mercy and truth are here seen to meet together, and righteousness and peace

peace to kiss each other. We behold the divine law supported, and all its rights vindicated, while pardon and eternal life are conferred on those who deserve eternal death. We are led, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, to see grace abounding, where sin had abounded; and to admire the triumphs of the former, in proportion as the latter had reigned. In the day of God's power, we behold those made the willing subjects of his kingdom, who had said unto him—"Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." How decisive is the evidence, in such seasons, that the things which are impossible with men, are possible with God? The methods adopted by infinite wisdom, to keep alive grace in the hearts of individual believers, and to preserve the church on the earth, are suited to raise within us high and admiring thoughts of the knowledge, power, mercy, and faithfulness, of the great Lord of all.

Believers are styled "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people;" and the great end of their calling is, that they may "shew forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."* Hence, also, the Apostle Paul, speaking of the final victory of believers, observes, in his address to them, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."† As Christians make the divine glory the ultimate end of their lives, they cannot withhold the desire, that their fellow men might place their affections on the same object; and that, therefore,

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

† 2 Cor. iv. 15.

fore, they might be made partakers of that grace, which alone leads the heart to God. He appears every way deserving the homage of his rational creatures, to all who are reconciled to his government. In the midst of all their imperfections, it is their hearts' desire and prayer, that the disobedient might be turned to the wisdom of the just, that their feet might be guided into the way of peace, and that their souls might magnify the Lord.

IN improving this discourse, we may observe,

1. That Christianity breathes an excellent spirit. We have seen its influence on the Apostle Paul, while he stood before Agrippa, defending himself against the falsehood and malice of his enemies. It has also been observed, that all the true followers of Jesus Christ are governed by the feelings of pure benevolence; and hence are led earnestly to desire the everlasting happiness of their fellow sinners; from the regard which they have, to the highest interest of mankind, to the honor of the crucified Saviour, and the glory of God. We must be lost to all sense of moral beauty, if we discover no charms in christian love. It is the bond of perfectness; it renders the happiness of others our own; and brings the soul into a state of communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Neither envy, nor malice, nor revenge, nor any corrupt affection, can reign in those who have imbibed the spirit of the gospel. They feel compassion for the souls of men; they mourn for the crimes and the follies of the wicked, and pray that God
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would grant to them repentance unto life. The universal dominion of christian love would put an end to the broils and contentions, which disturb the peace of society, and would banish slaughter and bloodshed from the earth.

We search in vain for any principle, which can render creatures one, under all circumstances and forever, except in the religion of Jesus Christ. Individuals may associate, and walk together for a time, from motives which originate in pride, contention, avarice, and other corrupt propensities; but when their private interests clash, they will become enemies to each other, without changing the ground on which their friendship was built. The discords among real Christians, which sometimes happen, are to be accounted for, from remaining sin; but their differences will soon be at an end. When they shall meet before the throne above, they will be made perfect in one; they will experience the inexpressible delight of mingling souls, and of uniting with one heart and voice, in the employments of the New Jerusalem. The moment any one cordially embraces the gospel, he enters into a brotherhood of the noblest and most endearing nature, he becomes a friend to God's holy intelligent kingdom, and he gives glory to his great name.

2. We infer the importance of receiving the gospel, in its primitive purity.

The religion of the Bible is essentially different from every other, that has been promulgated among mankind; not only as it opens a way for apostate creatures to be forgiven, and to be restored to the

divine favor, but as it breathes a spirit of pure and disinterested love. The doctrines and laws, which it contains, the self denial it requires, and the retributions it announces, widely distinguish it from all the efforts of the human mind. With the gospel in our hands, we must be criminal, if we be not convinced, that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

It was acknowledged by the enemies of Christ, in the course of his public ministry, that never man spake like him. He came into the world to bear witness unto the truth. The discourses, which were uttered by him, and by those who were immediately commissioned from on high, are inimitable, for their simplicity, and force. They impart light, peace, and fortitude to Christians ; and give them a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries are not able to gainsay nor resist. Preachers, who depart from the apostolic doctrine, may be admired for their depth, their learning, and their eloquence ; but their sermons will have nothing in them, which is adapted to edify the children of God, or to alarm the wicked. The weight and authority of evangelical truth, are not to be found in the tinsel show of art, nor in the subtilties of vain philosophy. The gospel is simple, and sublime ; and it is as much calculated for the lowest as the highest of the human race ; and holds out to both the same way of entering into life. Those who are the most humble are the most eminent in the school of Christ. Matth. xviii. "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? And
Jesus

Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

The character of the real christian is falsely assumed by those, who do not place the highest value on the faith which was one delivered to the saints, and who will not earnestly contend for it, against its enemies. It is declared, in the second Epistle of John, that "whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, *hath not God.*" How different is this language, from that of those, who make *individual sincerity* the only requisite test of religious truth! This last places Christianity on the same ground with Mahometanism, and Paganism; for every one will grant, that there are Mussulmen, and Heathens, who are *sincere*, or who profess with their mouths, what they believe in their hearts; and are fully persuaded, that their religion has both truth and divine authority on its side. Paul was sincere, while he was persecuting the church, and was in the road to ruin. His conversion was as necessary for his salvation as for his Apostleship. The former hope of this Pharisee was as groundless as that of his brethren; concerning which sect, Christ declares, in Matt. v. 20—"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall *in no case* enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Apostle would never have spoken
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of himself as the chief of sinners, and as having "obtained mercy for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe," if his christian judgment, or the Holy Ghost, had taught him, that he was a man of real piety, while he was punishing the saints in every synagogue, and compelling them to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ.

The heirs of promise are "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and *belief of the truth*."* The believer will not make a perfect agreement with his creed a term of communion; but, as the atonement, with the doctrines it involves, is the object of his faith, and the ground of his hope, he will not embrace those, as his brethren in the Lord, who strike at the foundation on which he builds for eternity. He is far from calling down fire from heaven, to consume those, who deny or pervert the gospel, and he prays, that God would give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth; but he will not designedly take any step, nor indulge any pliancy of behaviour, which may give countenance to the enemies of the cross. He considers those, as belonging to this class, who make individual opinion a sufficient standard of religious faith. He looks with abhorrence upon a device, which is the offspring of infidelity, and tends to universal scepticism.

— Had the Apostles been like our modern latitudinarians, we can discern no motive, which could have influenced them to act the part, which they did, in propagating the gospel. They could not have been impelled

impelled by motives of worldly gain, or honor; for they did not hold up, either to Jews or Gentiles, flattering earthly prospects; nor did they aim to make converts, by an artful address to the passions of their hearers, and by concealing the leading articles of their faith; but they early proclaimed, that their religion was far from being pleasing to flesh and blood, and that those, who embraced it, had nothing to expect, in this world, but reproaches, persecution, and death. The Apostles were as wretched themselves, as the malice of the Jews and Gentiles could render them. God set them forth, "as it were appointed to death," and "they were made as the filth of the world, and were the offscouring of all things," unto the end of their lives. They had been taught of Christ to look for all the evils they endured, before they entered on their mission. Paul saith, in 1 Cor. xv. 19th, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Men, who have not been attached to any particular system of faith, have never run such risks, and exposed themselves to such sufferings, for the sake of spreading any religion, when they had nothing to spur them on, either from wealth or ambition.

How could the Apostles have been induced to conduct as they did, on the latitudinarian plan; either from a regard to the happiness of their fellow men, the honor of Christ, or the glory of God? According to the scheme we are now exposing, they would have supposed, that the pharisaical Jews, and the idolatrous Pagans, might be saved, if they sincerely adhered to the religion, in which they had been educated.

cated. Why, then, should they be exhorted to embrace a new religion, which could offer them no surer ground of hope ; and, besides, would expose them to suffer great present loss ? The apostolic Missionaries would have acted a part no less inconsistent, if they had labored to persuade those to whom they were sent, to receive Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, and the only Mediator between God and man ; when it was a matter of perfect indifference to salvation, whether he were considered as the promised Messenger from the Father, or an impostor ; or whether he were considered as being God, or a mere creature, of the same rank with many distinguished human characters, that were esteemed, either among the Jews, or the Gentiles. Would they, had they been under the government of modern liberality, have denounced interminable punishment as the fruit of unbelief, had they been in doubt whether any future misery were to be expected ; or, if any, had they supposed, that it would be only for a limited duration, and that for the sole purpose of disciplining the subject into virtue, and rendering him happy ? Why would they have besought men to be reconciled to God—to JEHOVAH, the God of Israel, had it been not essential to human happiness, in what light the divine character were considered ? or whether the doctrine of the divine unity, or Polytheism, were embraced ?

It must appear, I think, to every reflecting mind, that, according to the lax religious sentiments of some, in our day, who would be thought believers in Christianity, the Apostles acted like madmen, the
 martyrs

martyrs were guilty of consummate folly, and the gospel is destitute of divine authority.

If we cordially embrace the religion of Jesus Christ, in its pure and heavenly nature, it will become the power of God unto the salvation of our souls; and we shall be fully convinced, that Paul acted a noble part, when he said to Agrippa, *I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* Where can we find a character, among mankind, so amiable and excellent as that of a true Christian? The cause, in which he is engaged, is worthy of the highest services, which have ever been performed for its advancement, and the sufferings which have been endured, and the blood which hath been spilled, for its sake.

If our minds, my brethren, be not corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, we stand on sure ground, whatever assaults may be made upon us. With hearts that breathe "Glory to God in the highest, and good will towards men," we shall not, by divine grace, be overcome, by all the powers of earth and hell. Having fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us, we shall have strong and abiding consolation. If "our loins be girt about with truth," and we take to ourselves every part of the armor of God, we shall be able to withstand in the evil day. We dare challenge all the wisdom of this world to invent a scheme, which, like the gospel, can unite the hearts of intelligent creatures to God, and to each other; and to account for the conduct of Christ, and his Apostles, from any other motives, than

than those which are drawn from the holy nature of the religion which they preached. If we give up the leading traits of Christianity, we shall resemble Sampson, when shorn of his locks, and shall become the scorn of infidels. Many of them know, that there is a wide difference between the religion of the Bible, and that which is found in the writings of pagan Moralists. If we attempt to blend them, or affect to consider them as radically the same, Deists may praise us in their words ; but they will despise us in their hearts, as being wanting, either in discernment, or integrity, or fortitude. If we have any regard to our own peace, to the souls of our fellow men, or to the cause of the Redeemer, let us “continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”

3. The present subject brings into view the spirit of the faithful Ministers of Jesus Christ, and their motives to fidelity.

Those whom the Holy Ghost hath made overseers over the flock of God, feel an affectionate regard to the souls of men, and to Him, who laid down his life for the sheep. Such Ministers can, in some degree, adopt the language of the Apostle, when addressing himself to the church at Philippi ; “God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” Their hearts are charmed with his religion ; as proclaiming peace on earth, and unfolding the excellencies of the divine mind. It is their earnest desire, that Christ may be magnified in their body, whether it be by life or by death.

Ministers

Ministers, of this description, will find powerful motives to incite them to fidelity in their arduous work; from the promised reward—from the hope of promoting the happiness of sinners—and from the worth and glory of the kingdom, to which they are devoted. They will be able to adopt the animating language of the Apostle, “Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favor of his knowledge by us in every place.”*

MAY much of the apostolic spirit rest on you, MY YOUNG FRIEND AND BROTHER, who are now to take the oversight of the Flock of God in this place. The charge of souls is a great and solemn charge. Who is sufficient for these things? From the acquaintance I have had with you, I am led to hope, that you feel the weight of the trust, which you are about to receive, and that your sufficiency is of God; who alone can make you an able Minister of the New Testament.

You have professed to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour, and to give up yourself to God, through him, in an everlasting covenant. As a Christian, you know the worth of your own soul, and the souls of your fellow men; and pray, that sovereign grace may be displayed, in the conversion of sinners. The primitive Ministers of the gospel were reconciled to God themselves, before they went forth to preach the word to others. If you stand on their ground, the same method hath
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* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

been taken in the divine conduct towards you. Is it not the fervent desire of your heart, that you may obtain mercy to be faithful; and that you may not labor in vain? Can you not look to your heavenly Father, at this time, and supplicate his gracious presence?

“If a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work.” It furnishes opportunity to promote the happiness of mankind, beyond any other. It is best adapted to rouse the stupid from their dangerous sleep, to lead them to repentance, and to train them up for heaven. Faithful Ministers of the gospel, in a high degree do honor to Christ, and promote the glory of that kingdom, which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Their employment is closely connected with the eternal world, and the day of judgment.

Possessing the spirit of your station, you will be impressed with high and commanding motives to be faithful; and will not dare to corrupt the word of God, nor to refrain from “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that you may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Experience abundantly teaches, that shining talents are no defence against error or wickedness. Let the gospel be the guide of your faith, and the joy of your heart, and you will not be suffered to fall into any fatal delusion in your doctrine, nor to cast off the fear of God in your practice. Under the influence of christian meekness and humility, you will not be puffed up by applause, nor be overwhelmed by reproach.

You

You are called to be a public Teacher, in a day, when the Lord "arise to shake terribly the earth." No period was ever seen, in which so many minds were equally unsettled, relative to moral and religious subjects; and in which Deism and Atheism were openly espoused by such numbers, as at the present time. "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy." If you watch and keep your garments, your faith will not be overthrown, but confirmed, by the events before us. Attend to the work, on which you are entering, with holy diligence and zeal; and place the means of conviction before this people, that you are willing to spend, and be spent, to promote their immortal happiness. Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, may you have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. It is of the highest importance, that the friends of evangelical truth appear boldly on its side, and that they exert themselves for its defence, against all its adversaries. Gird up the loins of your mind, and act the soldier under the great Captain of our salvation. Let the spirit of the gospel be manifested, by your preaching, by your example, and by the manner in which you perform all parts of the pastoral office. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Long may you serve God, in the gospel of his Son, be instrumental in turning many to righteousness, and at last receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.

THE People of THIS CHURCH AND SOCIETY, are under high and peculiar obligations to return thanks to God, on this joyful occasion. It hath pleased Him, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, to incline you, with a good degree of unanimity, to make choice of one to minister to you in holy things, who, as we trust, will, "by manifestation of the truth, commend himself to every man's conscience, in the sight of God." We hope that you will esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake; and that you will be at peace among yourselves. To you he has almost wholly confined his public services, during the few months, which have elapsed, since he began to preach the gospel. He will be much encouraged, if, in addition to the tokens of friendship, which he has already received from you, he continue to experience that tenderness and candor, which he has a right to expect from his years and standing. The ministry is his choice, above every other profession; and we have just reasons to believe, that it will be his delight. We are persuaded, Brethren, that you will not, through any neglect of yours, wish to divert him from study, and the other duties of his office.

Be exhorted, my Friends, to attend to the truth, as delivered in the holy scriptures, and to receive it in faith and love. You will behold that majesty, taste that sweetness, and discern that beauty, in the word of the Lord, which will awe your souls into reverence, inspire them with peace, and raise within them a joyful hope. Let it be your desire, that when your beloved Pastor ascends the desk, he may clearly

ly distinguish between the character of the saint, and the character of the sinner ; and that he may apply the promises and threatenings of the Bible, without respect of persons. Hear him, without a murmur, when he reproofs the wicked, when he detects the delusion of the hypocrite, and when he holds up Christ, as the way, the truth, and the life. Countenance him in every just attempt to effect a reformation, and to maintain gospel order. Remember him in your prayers ; and may the spirit of grace and of supplications be poured out upon you. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus ; that ye may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This occasion must revive in your minds the memory of the worthy man, who, a few years since, brake to you the bread of life ; and was removed from the world in the midst of his days and usefulness.* Ministers, like other men, are not suffered to continue by reason of death. Remember that the day is at hand, when they, and the people of their charge, must meet at the bar of God. Prepare to be found of your Judge in peace ; and may you behold him with the triumph of joy, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

EVERY one present, who is on the Lord's side, desires that his name may be magnified, and feels compassion

* Rev. JOSEPH APPLETON, who died July 25th, 1795, aged 44, and in the 20th year of his Ministry.

passion for perishing souls. Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things ; and strive, and pray, that it may be embraced and obeyed, by the unbelieving and rebellious. You admire the benevolence, and the fortitude, of the Apostle Paul, when he stood before Agrippa ; and, though you may never be called to appear on so great an occasion, you will not withhold your testimony to the same cause. Look to God, and he will help you, and not suffer you to be confounded, or ashamed, by the assaults of the infidel, or the mockings of the scorner. The sufferings of the faithful are but for a moment, and “work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

LET those, who are yet in their sins, be reconciled to God without delay. Be not *almost*, but *altogether* persuaded to become real Christians. Take the yoke of Christ upon you, and learn of him ; for he is meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Embrace him as a Prophet, as a Priest, and as a King, and confess him before men ; and he will confess you before the holy angels, and before his Father who is in heaven. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.—AMEN.”

THE
C H A R G E,

BY THE REV. *ELI FORBES*, OF GLOUCESTER.

AS the sons of Aaron, the officiating Priests of the Old Testament, were consecrated to the holy service of the sanctuary, by the imposition of hands, and the Pastors of the New, ever since the Apostles' days, have been separated and set apart to their office under the same rite, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; this mode, under the divine patronage, comes recommended to us from ancient usage, and an early adoption into the Christian Church.

And since it has pleased God, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, to incline and unite the hearts of this people to choose and invite you, Mr. THOMAS SNELL, to the work of the Gospel Ministry among them, and to the Pastoral Office over them; and to incline and dispose you to accept of their invitation; We, ordained Ministers and associated Pastors, at your and their desire, having layed our hands on your head, do, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by authority derived from him, consecrate you to the service of the sanctuary, and separate you to the work
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of the Ministry, and ordain you Pastor of the second Church of Christ in *Brookfield*.

And we charge you, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before our Lord Jesus, the great Head of the Church, that you faithfully do the work of an Evangelist, and move regularly in your own *sphere*, and make full proof of your Ministry. Know the state of your flock, over which the Holy Ghost, through our ministration, has now made you an Overseer; not by constraint, but of a ready mind; and give to every one his portion in due season. For this purpose,

Take heed to the Ministry you have received. Give all diligence that you may increase the flock of ministerial furniture, which, by the blessing of God on your studies, you have already acquired; that you may lay a good foundation for the discharge of the duties of your office, with reputation and safety to yourself, and with advantage to others. Give, therefore, attendance to reading. Read the holy scriptures, with an open, candid, and teachable mind. Read, also, other books, of human composition, especially in theology; and while you humbly improve the means of knowledge, keep your mind open to conviction, and judge for yourself, as in the sight of God; and call no man Master on earth, for one is your Master in heaven, even Christ. Thus, with a mind divested of prepossessions, open to the admission of truth, and removed from a servile dependence on the decisions of others, preach the word, the unadulterated gospel of God our Saviour; not, indeed, in the words which men's wisdom teacheth;
but

But in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Nor must you teach for doctrines the commandments of men, but the doctrines of the gospel, in their simplicity and purity; that your profiting may appear unto all men; and that, with the Apostle, when he came charged with the messages of the gospel to the city Corinth, you may appear principally to know Jesus Christ, even him who was crucified; making the doctrines of his cross your capital point in preaching: For these doctrines shew that way of salvation which you must pursue yourself, and clearly point out to those of your charge, that you may both save yourself, and them that hear you.

Take heed to thyself—to the state of your own mind. See that your heart is established with grace, and right in the sight of God; savingly impressed with the truths you preach—that you cultivate the graces, and exemplify the virtues, you inculcate upon others. Be thou an example to the flock, in good works, that you may give weight and energy to the doctrines you preach, adorning them with a blameless and a godly life; otherwise, when you have preached to others, you may be a castaway yourself. Your office is important; the discharge of its duties is big with your own and the future fates of men. For you watch for souls, as one who must give account.

Though your work is great, your trust interesting, and your future account awful; yet the grace of Christ is sufficient for you. If you are found faithful, you may depend, with safety, on that animating promise—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the

end of the world." Be thou, therefore, strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Go forth, before the flock, in the name of the Lord; and let no man despise thee.

By the authority committed to us, we empower you to administer the seals of the new covenant to all the proper subjects thereof: Baptism to visible saints, and to their infant seed; the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to all who make a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and their obedience, whose lives correspond with the doctrines of Christianity, which are according to godliness.

Preside in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God; and rule well; not lording it over God's heritage: But follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Be gentle unto all men, instructing them who oppose themselves, if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth.

And when you shall be called to ordain others to the work of the Ministry, commit thou the same things we repose with thee, to faithful men, who shall be able to instruct others also: But lay hands suddenly on no man, that the Ministry be not blamed.

Finally: As the work, to which you are called, has its peculiar trials, which you must bear with fortitude; its dangers, which you must encounter with courage; and its difficulties, which you must surmount by perseverance;—your Master's kingdom is not of this world; you must, therefore, expect little from the world: For, as you are set for the defence of the gospel, so you must expect to partake of the afflictions

afflictions of the gospel. Therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and let none of these things move you, neither count your life dear unto you, so that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry you have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God; which he is always ready to impart to his faithful servants, as they may need, and which will be sufficient for you. And we only add—Be assured, dear Sir, that a constant intercourse with God, by a life of prayer and piety, and a humble dependence on the unfailing promises of our and your Divine Master, will make your work comparatively easy, and give life and vigor to your exertions in the common cause. And if you thus, with piety, fortitude, and prudence, persevere in your work to the end, then, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.

THE

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE REV. EPHRAIM WARD, OF BROOKFIELD.

THE glorious design of the gospel is, to cultivate peace on earth, display the divine benevolence to mankind, and prepare them for endless felicity in glory. To accomplish this, the Son of God became man; exhibited the most perfect example of those graces, which tend to illuminate the mind, and meliorate the heart; and died, an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men. When he left this world, as to his bodily presence, he provided for the carrying on this great design. Accordingly, he appointed some Apostles, some Prophets, some Pastors, and Teachers, for the work of the Ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. And when God is pleased to confer this favor upon any, by putting them into the Ministry, the rules of Christianity, as well as propriety, teach us to congratulate them upon the honor Christ has done them; publicly to own them as his Ministers, and welcome them into the service of their Lord: That such as are in the Ministry should take them into fellowship with themselves, publicly acknowledge them their brethren, and companions, in the kingdom and service of Christ.

It

It is usual, by significant signs, as well as by words, to express our cordial affection, and fraternal regard, for fellow creatures ; and, in token of equality and friendship, the giving of the Right Hand of Fellowship to a brother, upon his induction into the office of the Ministry, is divinely taught, as a part of his initiation, and solemn separation to the sacred work.

In conformity to the apostolic rule, the uniform practice of the Churches, and in pursuance of the appointment of this venerable Council, to you, Reverend and dear Sir, I now give, and from you receive the social hand. Hereby signifying, that we look upon you a true Minister of Christ, and Pastor of the Church and Flock of God in this place ; regularly introduced into the sacred office ; invested with the same power, entitled to the same privileges, as well as obliged to the same duties, with those of us, who are in the Ministry. And, Reverend and dear Sir, we heartily congratulate you, upon the honor Christ has done you, in accounting you worthy, and putting you into the Ministry. We bless God for all those gifts and graces he has conferred upon you, which afford us a pleasing prospect of your being a faithful servant in his house. In the name of the Pastors of the Churches convened, let me assure you, that we welcome you, as a fellow laborer with us, in the vineyard of the Lord. And we do, with sincere affection, and fervent charity, embrace you as a brother, and companion, in the gospel Ministry ; and promise you all that affection, and assistance, you can reasonably desire of us ; and expect the same from you, as we stand in need. But, dear Sir, let me tell you,

you, that peculiar trials, and temptations, may attend the office you have undertaken. You may expect to meet great opposition, from the powers of darkness, as well as from the corrupt and perverse tempers of men; which will try your faith, your patience, your prudence, and every grace within you. We mention this, not to discourage you; but, beloved Brother, we warn you, that you may be prepared for the various trials, with which you may meet. And we assure you, for your comfort, and encouragement, that *He* is a good Master, *whom we serve*; and who has said, "Lo, I am with you always; my grace is sufficient for you." Here we leave you, to stand and labor in your lot, till the end of the days appointed you; praying, that the God of all grace may be with you, and crown your labors with abundant success.

I ADD a word to the Church and Congregation, usually meeting in this place.

Dearly beloved in our Lord,

We felt a tender concern for you, when your late pious and Reverend Pastor was taken from you. We, in this vicinity, sustained a great loss; but not so immediately concerned in it as you were. The kind providence of God is to be acknowledged, in preserving you from fatal errors, and divisions, while you were left as *sheep without a shepherd*.

That degree of harmony which has prevailed, and still prevails among you, we view as a token for good; and sincerely congratulate you, upon the resettlement of the gospel Ministry and Ordinances
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among you. We testify our union and fellowship with you, as a duly organized Church. We rejoice, that he, who is the Repairer of breaches, has repaired the *breach made upon you*. Behold the man! your Pastor, and spiritual guide. Receive him, as we hope and trust he is, a precious gift of our ascended Lord. And we beseech you, Brethren, to know him, who is called to labor among you, and who is over you in the Lord, and to esteem him very highly in love, for his work's sake; and be at peace among yourselves. And the God of love and peace be with you all.—AMEN.



